DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 150 324 CE 013 498

AUTHOR Cargill, Samuel Paul, Jr., Comp.
TITLE Vocational Research Coordinating Unit. A Handbook of Services.
INSTITUTION South Carolina Vocational Education Research Coordinating Unit, Clemson.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 29p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Agency Role; *Curriculum Development; Demonstration Projects; Educational Research; Pilot Projects; *Program Administration; Program Coordination; Program Planning; *Project Applications; *Projects; *Research Coordinating Units; Research Projects; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS South Carolina

ABSTRACT

This manual describes the program improvement responsibilities of the Research Coordinating Unit (RCU) of South Carolina's Office of Vocational Education. Following the introduction, the organization and functions of the RCU are briefly presented. The remainder of the booklet is comprised of eight short sections, each discussing an RCU function in more detail and explaining how interested and qualified parties can use the RCU's services to help promote vocational education research in South Carolina. The eight RCU functions covered in these sections are research and training projects, exemplary and innovative projects, curriculum development, requests for proposals, assistance in preparing proposals, project conditions and guidelines and project monitoring, report reviewing and approving, and vocational education information services. (EM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED150324

Vocational Research Coordinating Unit

A HANDBOOK OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VOCATIONAL RESEARCH COORDINATING UNIT OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

Compiled by
Samuel Paul Cargill, Jr., Consultant, VRCU

Cover Design by
Christopher J. Lerstang, Consultant, VRCU

CE 014 498

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M Moren

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

The Organization of the RCU 4

RCU Functions 6

Research and Training Projects 8

Exemplary and Innovative Projects 12

Curriculum Development 13

Requests for Proposals 16

Assistance in Preparing Proposals 18

Project Conditions and Guidelines and Project Monitoring 23

Report Reviewing and Approving 24

Vocational Education Information Service 26

Introduction

Public Law 94-482 requires each state to establish a research coordinating unit (RCU) for vocational education. This RCU must be designed to coordinate research programs, exemplary and innovative programs, and curriculum development activities within the state. It must develop a comprehensive plan for program improvement, and the procedures to assure dissemination of results from all of its activities throughout the state.

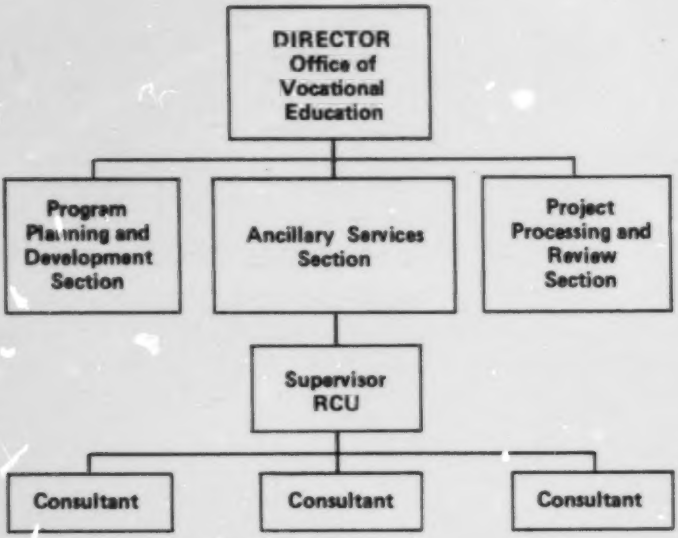
Of course, research, exemplary and innovative and curriculum development activities are in themselves very important to vocational education. But their real significance lies in their interdependent roles in overall program improvement. This manual is intended to describe the program improvement responsibilities of the Research Coordinating Unit of the Office of Vocational Education of the South Carolina State Department of Education. It will outline the organization, functions, procedures, and services of the VRCU, provide information about the kinds of projects which are funded through the VRCU, and offer helpful suggestions on proposal and report writing. We at the State Office of Vocational Education hope that the manual will help to generate more interest in seeking funding for worthwhile projects, and enable South Carolina educational agencies and institutions to develop more projects which will be a credit to the public of both the state and the nation.

The Organization of the RCU

The Research Coordinating Unit is part of the Ancillary Services Section of the Office of Vocational Education, which is part of the Division of Instruction, South Carolina State Department of Education. The RCU is headed by a Supervisor, who reports directly to the Chief Supervisor of the Ancillary Services Section. The RCU Supervisor is responsible for the activities and personnel assigned to the RCU. All of the RCU's research personnel report directly to the RCU Supervisor. The simple organizational chart on the following page illustrates this clearly.

There is an Advisory Committee for the RCU. This committee is composed of the Director of the Office of Vocational Education (Chairman), the Chief Supervisor of the Program Planning and Development Section, the Chief Supervisor of the Ancillary Services Section, and the Chief Supervisor of the Project Processing and Review Section. The primary functions of this Advisory Committee are to identify and verify vocational educational needs, establish vocational education priorities, review and recommend approval of all requests for proposals (RFP's), and advise the RCU Supervisor on critical issues and problems presented to or raised by the committee.

The Organization of the RCU



RCU Functions

The RCU has a very important role in vocational education in South Carolina. Its main responsibilities lie in the coordination of research projects, exemplary and innovative projects and curriculum development activities, as part of an overall strategy of program improvement for vocational education. To achieve this broad goal, the RCU is regularly involved in all of the following activities:

1. It helps to identify critical needs in vocational education. This is done in a number of ways, with surveys and research being the two most common.

2. It designs and prepares project guidelines and proposal requirements. Requests for proposals fall into this category, and the RCU prepares them and distributes them at appropriate times.

3. It prepares proposals or provides assistance to others who are preparing them.

4. It provides money for research and related projects.

5. It helps project activities to get started, and then coordinates and monitors them to make sure the job is getting done in an acceptable manner according to law and established guidelines.

6. It reproduces and disseminates research products as appropriate. This service includes materials as well as information, techniques, methods, and concepts.

7. It evaluates project processes and tests the effectiveness of products in practical situations.

8. It prepares reports on the conclusions drawn from evaluation and test results.

In addition to these primary administrative functions, the RCU also provides other services to promote vocational education in South Carolina. Some of the more important of these are listed below:

1. It stores, maintains, and provides pertinent information for planning, reporting, and decision-making purposes. By doing this, the RCU is able to help others in vocational education to get the kind of information they need to do a good job.

2. It operates and maintains an occupational information system that gives job descriptions and current information on wages, hours, job futures, and working conditions. This helps students and counselors to plan wisely for future job demands in the State.

3. It provides non-statistical vocational information for use in federal and state plans, reports, and documents. This service helps the government to do more informed planning and evaluation of South Carolina's vocational training system.

4. It conducts training and related activities for target groups of potential users of research products.

5. It provides assistance to personnel within and outside the Office of Vocational Education in planning, designing, implementing, continuing, or updating research projects or related activities.

Some of these functions of the RCU are discussed in more detail in following sections of this manual. In each section, there is a brief explanation of how interested and qualified parties can use the RCU's services to help promote vocational education research in South Carolina.

Research and Training Projects

One of the major responsibilities of the RCU is the administration of research and training projects. Contracts for research and training projects are made by the Office of Vocational Education, South Carolina State Department of Education, through the RCU. As outlined by Federal Law, contracts can be made by the RCU pursuant to comprehensive plans of program improvement involving the following:

1. Applied research and development in vocational education.

2. Experimental, developmental, and pilot programs and projects designed to test the effectiveness of research findings, including programs and projects designed to overcome problems of sex bias and sex stereotyping.

3. Improved curriculum materials for presently funded programs in vocational education and new curriculum materials for new and emerging job fields, including a review and revision of any curricula developed under this section to ensure that such curricula do not reflect stereotypes based on sex, race, or national origin.

4. Projects in the development of new careers and occupations, including mental and physical health, crime prevention and correction, welfare, education, municipal services, child care, recreation, and public service aides.

A brief clarification of the three major types of programs or projects follows.

An experimental program is a type of research whose outcome may or may not be positive. It is usually in

test a theory through practical application—in short, to try an idea to see if it works. This does not mean, however, that experimental programs should not be carefully and thoroughly designed, or that existing research findings should not be employed to avoid needless repetition or false starts. Because the results of an experimental program are unknown, and to some extent unpredictable, careful evaluation of this kind of program is essential.

A developmental program differs from an experimental program in that its outcomes are predictable and describable. This type of program produces materials or demonstrates techniques which are designed to accomplish objectives decided on beforehand. Ultimately the developmental program should produce positive results.

A pilot program is intended to be a model program on which other, similar programs can be based. It may be created to determine the success of materials, techniques, or processes when applied to a new or different setting. Like the developmental program, it should have positive results.

The three kinds of programs described above, might conceivably be one project taken through three phases. Phase one, experimental, decides if the project theory is sound; phase two, developmental, produces materials or methods designed to create the positive results predicted in phase one. Phase three, piloting, involves complete testing of the product obtained in phase two, in preparation for further dissemination. In many cases, of course, all three types of programs are necessary to the completion of a project, and funding might involve only one type.

Annually the Office of Vocational Education of the South Carolina State Department of Education receives funds that can, in the form of contracts or grant awards, be designated for, and used to support, vocational research projects. The RCU solicits proposals and processes the contracts according to the following set policy:

1. All vocational research projects must comply with

the intent of Public Law 94-482, Subpart 3, Section 131.

2. All proposals considered for funding must address or relate to the predetermined and approved needs or priorities established by the State Department of Vocational Education, Office of Vocational Education, and reflecting the needs of the State's vocational educators.

3. Research contracts will be awarded no later than 30 days after the beginning of each fiscal year. No project may be funded for more than three consecutive years.

4. All vocational research proposals will be solicited, reviewed, and processed by the Vocational Research Coordinating Unit. The Program Planning and Development Section staff will review and provide recommendations on all proposals with direct instructional implications.

5. Proposals shall be solicited annually from all known eligible recipients, using the request for proposal (RFP) method. (For a discussion of a typical RFP, see page 16 of this handbook.)

6. All RFP's for vocational research proposals will be prepared and distributed by the RCU.

7. Agencies and institutions eligible to submit proposals are: colleges and universities; other public or non-profit private agencies and institutions; local education agencies; and private agencies, organizations, and institutions.

8. All proposals must be submitted by the deadline set in the RFP in order to be given consideration for funding.

9. All proposals must comply with the guidelines, requirements, and specifications stated in the request

for proposals approved by the Office of Vocational Education.

10. All proposals must be processed and approved with the standard processing procedures established by the South Carolina State Department of Education, with final approval by the Deputy Superintendent for the Division of Instruction.

The statewide needs and priorities of South Carolina vocational educators will be reflected in the statement of needs and priorities established by the State Office of Vocational Education staff, approved by the Director of the Office of Vocational Education, and reviewed and approved by the Deputy Superintendent for Instruction. These needs and priorities will be stated in the requests for proposals (RFP's) which the RCU mails out to a list of eligible recipients compiled by Office of Vocational Education personnel. Proposals will also be accepted from individuals, institutions, and agencies not included on this list, if they are eligible under existing federal and state legislation.

When proposals are received by the RCU, a proposal review panel, selected on the basis of their knowledge and experience in the field or with the subject addressed in the REP, will review and evaluate each proposal, making appropriate comments and recommendations. Next, the RCU Supervisor compiles all of the results and recommendations of the review panel for each proposal, and prepares each proposal for processing. The proposals are then processed for review through appropriate Office of Vocational Education personnel, including the Chief Supervisors of Ancillary Services, Program Planning and Development and Project Processing and Review, and the Office of Vocational Education Accountant. Then the proposals go to the Director of the Office of Vocational Education and the Deputy Superintendent for instruction for final approval, unless the proposal is required by law to have the approval of the State Superintendent of Education and the State Board of Education.

Following a proposal's final approval, a contract will be prepared jointly by the Project Processing and Review Section and the RCU, and will be sent to the individual, institution or agency which originated the proposal. Conditions and guidelines, as well as monitoring procedures for each project will then be developed by the RCU, and reviewed with award recipients in detail, to ensure complete understanding and compliance with the terms of the awards. (For a more detailed discussion of this procedure, see page of this handbook.) The RCU will monitor the project's activities until it is terminated, giving advice and recommendations where appropriate, receiving and processing all reports, and assembling all materials provided to the RCU as part of the terms of the grant award. A copy of all final reports and project materials will be retained by the RCU, also.

Exemplary and Innovative Projects

Another major responsibility of the RCU is the awarding of federal funds for exemplary and innovative programs. An **exemplary** or **innovative** program is defined by law as a program which falls into one or more of the following categories:

1. A program designed to develop high quality vocational education programs for urban centers with high concentrations of economically disadvantaged individuals, unskilled workers, and unemployed individuals.

2. A program designed to develop training opportunities for persons in sparsely populated rural areas and for individuals migrating from farms to urban areas.

3. A program designed to provide effective vocational education for individuals with limited English speaking ability.

4. A program designed to correlate vocational education opportunities with current and projected needs of the labor market.

5. A program designed to broaden occupational aspirations and opportunities for youth, with special emphasis given to youth who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps. This includes programs to familiarize elementary and secondary school students with the broad range of occupations for which skills are required, and the requisites for careers in such occupations. It also includes programs designed to facilitate the participation of employers and labor organizations in post-secondary vocational education.

State agencies have been specifically advised by the law that priority must be given to programs and projects which are designed to reduce sex stereotyping in vocational education.

Application review procedures for exemplary and innovative projects are the same as those for research projects.

Curriculum Development

Another important activity of the Research Coordinating Unit is the coordination of all of South Carolina's curriculum development activities in vocational education. This role of the RCU is established in Public Law 94-482, Subpart 3, Section 133.

Curriculum development activities funded through the Office of Vocational Education should focus on predetermined statewide vocational needs and job skill training requirements. The process (outlined briefly below) by which these needs should be addressed should generally consist of: research, development, field testing/evaluation, revision, demonstration, and dissemination. Provisions should be made

for continuous updating to assure that the vocational training provided is relevant and of high quality, effectively meeting the needs of both students and employers. The materials provided should allow for teaching and learning practices whereby students can participate in individualized instruction, manipulative skill development, group interaction, and performance assessment, which will best serve the particular needs of each student. All curriculum materials developed should be free of bias or stereotyping on the basis of sex, race, and national origin.

Policies for curriculum development funding are generally the same as those for other kinds of research and exemplary and innovative projects, described earlier in this handbook. In accordance with Public Law 94-482, no contract will be made for a curriculum development activity unless the applicant can demonstrate a reasonable probability that the contract will result in improved teaching techniques or curriculum materials that will be used in a substantial number of classrooms or other learning situations within five years after the termination date of the contract.

The Vocational Education Media Center at Clemson University serves as the State laboratory for vocational education curriculum development. Its staff and facilities exist for this purpose, and a large portion of South Carolina's curriculum development involves the Media Center directly. Any curriculum development activities conducted through agencies or organizations other than the Media Center will be done through open competition in response to a request for proposals (RFP) prepared by the RCU.

The RCU will develop, in cooperation with the Program Planning and Development Section of the Office of Vocational Education, a comprehensive planning base for curriculum development, to be outlined in the annual and five-year plans for vocational education in South Carolina. All curriculum development activities coordinated by the RCU, whether developed through the Media Center or through competitive grant awards, will be conducted in accordance with the following general cycle:

1. **Research**: The type of research needed will be determined. Then, the most practical approach and the amount of resources needed will be established. The research will be conducted, and a report of its results submitted for analysis and decision-making about further development.

2. **Development**: Existing material will be identified, selected, reviewed, and modified as necessary and feasible to meet particular curriculum needs. Then, any new materials will be developed as necessary. The materials will be replicated and field-tested, and a report will be submitted on the development procedure for analysis and further decision-making.

3. **Field Testing and Evaluation**: Methods of evaluation and evaluation sites will be selected, and a thorough evaluation conducted, according to acceptable procedures. A detailed report of the results of the evaluation will be made for analysis, after which appropriate recommendations for adjustments, modifications, or revisions of the materials can be made. Additionally, a report will be made on the evaluation procedures themselves, so that valuable techniques can be duplicated for other similar projects.

4. **Revision**: All recommended revisions will be determined, and the materials revised as necessary. Following revision, all materials will be replicated for implementation and prepared for distribution. Again, a report must be submitted on the revision procedure, so that useful techniques can be duplicated as necessary.

5. **Demonstration** (Optional): If further demonstration of the revised curriculum materials is necessary, criteria and guidelines for demonstration sites will be set, sites selected, and the materials set up and demonstrated at the sites. Demonstration may establish the effectiveness of curriculum materials, and provide a "showcase" for the materials in use. As with the other components of the curriculum de-

velopment cycle, reports on the effectiveness of the demonstration effort must be made.

6. **Implementation:** Before any curriculum materials can be used, teachers (and other administrators) must know how to use them. This will be accomplished through in-service training. Following this training, the materials will be distributed to the teachers who will implement them, assisted by follow-up and support services as needed. A thorough report of implementation and in-service activities must be submitted at the conclusion of this component.

7. **Dissemination:** In order to make sure that the curriculum development effort has more than a regional (or even statewide) impact, its results must be disseminated, as appropriate, to state and national organizations (U. S. Office of Education, National Center for Research in Vocational Education, etc.). When this step has been accomplished, the curriculum development cycle is complete.

Requests for Proposals

As noted earlier, the Research Coordinating Unit issues requests for proposals (RFP's) as part of its efforts to provide for comprehensive program improvement. The RFP is an invitation for local education agencies, institutions, or individuals to compete for available funds by submitting proposals for projects or programs which will fill identified statewide vocational education needs. The RFP presents several advantages to the agencies or individuals who receive it, as well as to the Office of Vocational Education. Some of these advantages are:

1. All eligible agencies are informed that funds are available for certain kinds of projects.

2. There is less time lost in getting needed proposals prepared for funding.

3. Agencies other than the Office of Vocational Education have the opportunity to develop needed programs for the benefit of all.

4. The kind of project or program needed is well-defined, and its priority goals stated clearly. This helps applicants to tailor their proposals to stated needs, and prevents many delays and rejections.

5. The RFP procedure helps assure that funds expended will be compatible with the continuing development of quality vocational education in South Carolina.

6. Accountability for all financial appropriations is clearly established.

7. Funding levels for priority goals and activities are set clearly.

8. Means of auditing and timetables are clearly spelled out.

9. Information on priority areas of concern helps local agencies in their own comprehensive planning.

The idea of the RFP is to tell other agencies exactly what kinds of programs or projects the Office of Vocational Education is seeking. Thus, it provides a considerable amount of essential information and establishes well-defined criteria. The points of the RFP should be addressed closely in proposals submitted in response to it. Some of the points that may be included in an RFP are:

1. The focus of the project, in addition to a short, descriptive title.

2. The kinds of agencies or individuals who will be eligible to submit proposals.

3. The desired outcomes or services to be provided.

4. A description of how the need should be resolved (the suggested method of the project).

5. The evaluation outcome desired.

6. The proposal due date and funding period.

7. The minimum products anticipated.

8. The qualifications of personnel who would work on the project.

9. The funding range and the number of proposals which will be funded.

10. The relationship of the project to Office of Vocational Education goals and statewide needs and priorities.

Assistance in Preparing Proposals

The Research Coordinating Unit will give assistance in the writing of proposals to local educational institutions, at their request. One of the most important tasks is clear planning and expression of intent by those in charge of conceiving, administering, and evaluating projects. Unless goals are well-defined and specific, the project will begin on unsure footing, and time will be lost on false starts and dead-ends.

Once the project starts, it should run on a predetermined course. If administrators try to give direction to the project as it goes on, the result will be much like trying to lay track in advance of a speeding locomotive. But if projects are planned thoroughly and executed according to plan, managing and reporting will not be difficult. Instead, the success-

ful administrator will discover that it is as easy for him to measure and define the outcomes of the project at the end of the funding period as it was for him to state the project's goals and guiding principles at the beginning.

The Research Coordinating Unit can help a good idea get started with a good proposal by making recommendations and suggestions to potential applicants, who will then have the responsibility of writing and editing the proposal to guideline specifications.

A good proposal serves three major functions:

1. It serves as a blueprint which specifically spells out, through the objectives and project plan, the intended outcomes of the proposed project.

2. It describes in detail the procedures or techniques to be used to reach the intended outcomes.

3. It serves as a contract for the receipt and expenditure of funds.

The last function is particularly important. Since the proposal is a contract, the agency submitting the proposal is legally bound to its terms. This is why it is critical to develop thorough and realistic plans for each proposal, to prevent default on the responsibilities which it outlines.

The art of good proposal writing cannot be discussed in great detail in this manual, but a brief outline follows, which should help.

All proposals submitted to the Research Coordinating Unit must include the following elements:

1. **An abstract, or summary:** This should be brief (usually less than 200 words). It should be clear and specific, and it should describe who will administer the project, the scope of the project, and the projected total cost. It should state briefly how the pro-

ject will improve the quality or quantity of vocational education, its implications for developing new programs in the state, or for extending vocational education to persons who are not currently being served.

2. **The rationale for the proposal:** This section states why application for funds is being made. It should include the background of the problem the proposal will address, a clear statement of what the problem is, a review of pertinent literature (to establish what, if anything, has already been done in this area), and a statement of the project's potential contribution to vocational education. This section should be as specific as possible.

3. **Objective:** These should be specific, measurable, concrete, and achievable. They should be written so that only one major measurable item is included in each objective, and they should be listed in approximate order of importance. Of course, they should be clear and precise. The objectives should indicate the anticipated outcomes and expected impact of the project. Methods can be listed later.

4. **Methodology and design:** This section should state what is to be done and how the proposed project is to be conducted. It should show clearly that the activities conducted during the project will help to attain the objectives stated earlier. This section should also describe the location and the participants, stating the reasons why they were selected. It should state when the project will start, and the sequence of steps which must be taken to begin and to conduct the project.

5. **Management plan:** This section should describe the organizational and administrative structure for conducting the project. It should indicate the relationship of the project staff to local administrators, supervisors, teachers, advisory committees, etc. It should describe any special cooperative agreements with other agencies, as well as with business and industry,

and it should include job descriptions (or responsibilities) and position qualifications.

6. **Schedule of events:** This should list the activities necessary for successful completion of the project, and provide a date for the completion of each activity. This helps the project staff to monitor progress and it helps the staff to think through the whole year's activities before the project begins. It also helps the Research Coordinating Unit or other agency to monitor the project's progress more effectively. Each activity in the schedule of events should relate directly or indirectly to one or more of the objectives of the project. Each objective should have a beginning and a concluding activity in the schedule of events.

7. **Evaluation plan:** Any project will be of unknown value unless there is a thorough evaluation of the results. This section of the proposal should outline plans and strategies for evaluating the project in light of the stated objectives. The evaluation plan should also describe how the impact of the project will be measured. It must be noted that the funding agency will also evaluate the project staff and possibly other aspects of the project, to determine the progress being made toward the satisfactory completion of the project's objectives, and the quality of the work being completed.

8. **Personnel:** This section should list the names, titles, pertinent experience, and qualifications of the people who will conduct the project. If some of these people must be hired, the proposal should indicate the level of experience and other qualifications of the people who will conduct the project. If some of these people must be hired, the proposal should indicate the level of experience and other qualifications which must be met. Be realistic: if the job is a job for an M.A., don't specify a Ph.D. Also include the job description and/or responsibilities of each staff member, commit-

tee, or panel (created or used by the staff) in as much detail as possible.

9. **Budget:** This section should present a detailed budget, including all indirect charges. It should indicate any line items for which the grant will pay. If contributions have been obtained from other sources, they should be listed in the budget separately for each appropriate line item where they will be used. All matching funds must be in cash only; no "in kind" contributions can be recognized as part of matching funds. Generally, grant awards cannot be used for equipment purchases, except small items that are absolutely essential to the project (if there is any question, the RCU supervisor should be consulted). The following is a list of typical line items which should appear in the budget:

   a. Personnel (director, assistant director, secretary, graduate assistant, consultants, etc.)

   b. Fringe benefits (social security, retirement, etc.)

   c. Travel (personnel or participants)

   d. Equipment (see above)

   e. Supplies (office, instructional, etc.)

   f. Telephone

   g. Postage

   h. Printing, binding, advertising, etc.

   i. Miscellaneous (with appropriate explanations—3rd party evaluators may fall into this category or the consultant category)

This short outline of the elements of a proposal is intended to help local agencies to produce good proposals that may be eligible for funding. The Research Coordinating Unit

stands ready to give assistance to all worthwhile efforts toward this end. If any agency or institution wishes additional information about available publications on proposal writing, the Research Coordinating Unit can supply helpful information on request.

Project Conditions and Guidelines and Project Monitoring

As outlined in preceding sections of this handbook, the Research Coordinating Unit has the responsibility of awarding grants and contracts for projects. Because there are legal regulations and requirements which must be adhered to, each grant carries certain basic conditions concerning the manner in which the money may be spent or the project administered. There are usually Federal and State guidelines which must be observed, also. In addition, good management procedures require the RCU to add certain guidelines which will facilitate the monitoring and coordinating of projects under its control.

Some of the conditions and guidelines commonly attached are requirements for submission of quarterly reports, provisions for reimbursement, beginning and ending dates for the project, requirements for participation in workshops and other activities, permission and/or requirements for on-site visits, and various other guidelines created to ensure strict adherence to the objectives and methods outlined in the project proposal.

All guidelines are carefully discussed with the agency or institution receiving the grant award, and all parties must agree to the guidelines before the award can be finalized. The purpose of these conditions and guidelines, of course, is to ensure that all parties have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and to ensure that there will be no misunderstanding of these responsibilities at a later date.

After the project begins, the RCU staff must monitor it in certain ways to make sure that it is running on schedule, that funds are being spent as planned, and that the project plan is being adhered to. Included in these monitoring activities are such things as on-site visits by RCU personnel, review of progress reports and quarterly reports, participation in advisory committee meetings, and participation in other important project activities. These observations help the RCU to do its job properly, and help the project staff to keep its program running according to its original intentions.

Report Reviewing and Approving

Although the RCU is not equipped to conduct detailed evaluation research in connection with projects which it coordinates (development and administration of tests or surveys, accumulation of statistics, etc.), it does evaluate the overall success or failure of projects. This important task is accomplished in part through review of progress and final reports.

Every project funded through the RCU has a reporting procedure built into its conditions and guidelines. **Progress reports**, as the name implies, communicate the progress being made by the project over a period of time (usually quarterly). These reports should describe the major activities, accomplishments, and events that relate to the achievement of proposed goals and objectives of the project. They should show how well project schedules have been met, and should identify any unexpected problems or changes that may alter the planned outcomes of the project. Finally, they should provide a brief description of planned activities, noting any unexpected schedule revisions.

Final reports, much like progress reports, should describe the project's activities, indicate materials produced and results attained, and provide a thorough evaluation of the

finished product. The difference, of course, is that the final report is submitted at the end of the project, and covers all events from beginning to end. Final report guidelines are consistent with federal reporting requirements. An informal submission of a draft of the final report for review is usually required: it helps to ensure adequate reporting, and thus enhances the value of the research information provided. The RCU will review final reports, and make suggestions for their improvement. However, the RCU cannot do extensive editing and rewriting: this is the responsibility of the grantee or project staff. It is of paramount importance to remember that well-written, clear, accurate reports enhance the value of good research and development projects. Therefore, the highest professional standards must be maintained throughout. Misspelled or misused words, vague or unspecific phrasing, and lack of careful organization will wreck a report. The RCU stresses the importance of avoiding such pitfalls in report preparation and will carefully review all reports to ensure high professional quality.

It is important to remember that final reports are not written purely for the RCU, nor are they intended to be more exercises in rhetoric. All final reports must be forwarded to appropriate Federal agencies, usually the U. S. Office of Education, as part of the conditions of the grant award. They may become part of a national information system (i.e. ERIC, AIM/ARM) which may include other projects of similar intent.

All reports submitted on research projects must follow the format outlined in the manual, "Preparing Research Reports for the U. S. Office of Education," which is available on request from the following address:

U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
U. S. Office of Education
National Center for Educational Research
and Development
Washington, D. C. 20202

All reports submitted on exemplary projects must follow the format outlined in the manual, "Preparing Progress Reports

and Final Reports for Exemplary Projects in Vocational Education," or an approved version, which is available on request from the following address:

U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
U. S. Office of Education
Bureau of Occupational and Adult Education
Washington, D. C. 20202

Vocational Education Information Services

In addition to its other services, the RCU is prepared to assist local schools and other educational agencies in obtaining information about research materials, instructional materials, promising projects or programs, and current trends in vocational education. This information is often valuable in preparing proposals, making program improvements, and in keeping up to date with developments in the vocational field.

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), which is housed at Ohio State University, is a system which provides ready access to information on the results of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information that can be used in developing more effective educational programs, writing good proposals, and establishing solid, worthwhile goals for vocational education. The system contains abstracts of books, research reports, speeches, instructional materials, journal articles, state-of-the-art papers, and other important resources. Another complementary information system, Resources in Vocational Education (formerly AIM and ARM), contains abstracts and bibliographies on vocational education instructional materials, research, and specially funded projects. Information from these sources can also be had in complete form, through the full-text documents from which the abstracts were developed.

The South Carolina State Department of Education's Education Products Center (EPC) provides ERIC and AIM/ARM searches for all of the state's educators, including vocational educators. Through the EPC, computer searches of these national information systems can be made, and abstracts of relevant documents made available to those who request them. The Research Coordinating Unit will assist vocational educators to use this system. Through cooperation with the EPC, the RCU can forward requests for computer searches, screen the results, and get the information to those who request it. If, after reading the computerized abstracts, vocational educators desire full-text copies, the RCU can provide microfiche and hard-copy through the resources of the South Carolina State Library without charge for the service. Because of costs and time requirements on the RCU staff, however, this service cannot ordinarily be provided to graduate students who intend to use the information in theses and dissertations.

The RCU's information-providing service is not entirely limited to assistance with computer services. Some information on promising programs or projects and current trends in vocational education, particularly in South Carolina, can also be provided on request. Specific inquiries and requests for additional information about the RCU should be addressed as follows:

Supervisor, Vocational Research Coordinating Unit
Office of Vocational Education
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201
Telephone (803) 758-2358

Additional information may also be obtained directly from the following agencies:

Education Products Center
Production Section
South Carolina Department of Education
1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Center for Vocational Education
The Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, Ohio 43210